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S E C R E T NICOSIA 000143

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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SE, INL, L

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/18/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [KCRM](#) [CY](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: CYPRUS: WANTED DHKP-C TERRORIST'S FUTURE UNCERTAIN

REF: A. TD 314/062044-08

[B](#). TD 314/061720-08

[C](#). TD 314/011454-09

Classified By: Ambassador Frank C. Urbancic, Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

[1](#). (S) SUMMARY: RoC Deputy Justice Minister Andys Tryfonides on February 19 informed the Ambassador that Turkish national Aslan Tayfun Ozkok would complete the same day a jail sentence for attempted illegal entry into Cyprus. Tryfonides feared that Ozkok, a member of a recognized terrorist organization and the subject of an Interpol Red Notice for murder and other crimes, might flee the island and thereby escape incarceration for these more serious crimes should the RoC not receive a formal request from Ankara to return him. Turkey's non-recognition of Cyprus and its refusal to engage RoC officials directly was behind the GoT's lack of action, the MoJ official believed. "What can we do about it?" he asked, only partially rhetorically. Subsequent Embassy inquiries determined that Cypriot police will continue to detain Ozkok until his recently-filed application for political asylum is adjudicated. Longer-term, a creative solution is needed to ensure he serves time in Turkey commensurate with his crimes. END SUMMARY.

[2](#). (S) Ref A indicates that Turkish national Aslan Tayfun Ozkok was a senior cadre member of the Turkish Revolutionary People's Liberation Party (DHKP-C), the successor organization to Dev-Sol. Wanted for numerous violent crimes in Turkey, including three murders, he became the subject of Interpol Red Notice A/174/4-1996. Ozkok reportedly entered Cyprus from Athens on July 19, 2008, staying 11 days on the island. He returned on August 4 via Damascus, only to be turned away at Larnaca Airport when RoC immigration inspectors suspected that the Bulgarian passport he was carrying was false. After a brief stay in Damascus, he attempted to re-enter at Larnaca on August 9, and was detained by RoC officials. On August 14, he appeared in a Cypriot court and was sentenced to eight months imprisonment for possession and use of false identity documents.

[3](#). (S) Turkish law enforcement later learned of Ozkok's arrest and imprisonment and sought his return. Likely owing to political consideration -- Ankara's non-recognition of the Republic of Cyprus -- they bypassed Interpol Nicosia and went directly to Interpol Headquarters in Lyon (Ref B) with a request for return; as a backup plan, they envisioned UNFICYP taking Ozkok from RoC officials and handing him to "TRNC" authorities.

[4](#). (C) During the Ambassador's February 19 courtesy call on new RoC Minister of Justice Loucas Louca, Deputy Minister

Andys Tryfonides raised the Ozkok case, recounting facts regarding the arrest and detention of the Turkish national. His short sentence for presenting false identity documents would end that day, Tryfonides informed, and the RoC was worried what would come next. "We don't want to release a wanted terrorist," he avowed. Yet Turkey was refusing to file a request for action on the Red Notice with Interpol Nicosia. Ankara had ignored Nicosia's latest communication on the case, again sending a formal request to the Interpol secretariat. That office in turn had transmitted a message to Nicosia that was "wholly unacceptable on political grounds." (Note: we did not see the correspondence, but can reasonably assume it sought a third-party transfer, perhaps even releasing Ozkok to "TRNC" authorities.) Tryfonides reiterated that Cypriot law enforcement could not repatriate the Turk without a formal request from Ankara; barring that, Ozkok could walk. "What can we do?" he pled. Ambassador promised to follow up immediately.

15. (S) Subsequent Embassy inquiries on February 19 revealed that Ozkok recently had filed for political asylum in Cyprus (Ref C). Under RoC law, if an applicant has earlier been convicted of crimes, he can be detained while the application undergoes investigation and adjudication. As these administrative processes are lengthy and because a huge backlog of cases exist in Cyprus, Ozkok likely will remain in jail for at least several months, our contacts reported. Should he lose his case in this administrative process, Ozkok can appeal in the Cypriot court system. In parallel, Cypriot authorities had asked Athens whether Greece might accept the asylum application for adjudication, owing to Ozkok's earlier presence there. They expected a response to their request of Athens by February 20.

16. (C) COMMENT: Recognition issues apparently are blocking the practical imperative of delivering Ozkok to justice in Turkey, with the G/C side fearful of "upgrading the pseudostate" in the north and Turkey not wanting to deal with the "unrecognized" Republic of Cyprus. While we cannot realistically expect Ankara to file Ozkok's papers directly with Nicosia -- even though he is a terrorist wanted for murdering Turks -- we hope both governments will show flexibility in exploring some mutually acceptable repatriation/extradition options. A turnover to "TRNC" officials clearly is not one of them. We stand ready to re-engage with the Cypriot MoJ to explore options that Embassy Ankara or the Department may suggest. Athens seems to us to be the best option.
Urbancic